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STAT

Scientologists Win Landmark Decision Against Government Harassment

The Church of Scientology has long been in the forefront of effective use of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to expose government agency abuses against American citizens and groups.

The Church has exposed abuses ranging from the testing of dangerous bacteria on unwitting citizens to discriminatory and harassing IRS tactics. Because of these hard-hitting exposés, retaliation from government agencies in an effort to silence the Church was inevitable.

A massive black propaganda campaign was launched against the Church, based on government agency originated and widely disseminated false reports. In one particular instance, these false reports were then used to prevent Scientology ministers from entering the United States.

Such unfounded actions made it necessary for the Church to unearth the sources of the false reports maintained in government agency files. To accomplish this, the Church launched a program, the purpose of which was specifically to locate and LEGALLY expunge false reports about the Church generated and disseminated by various government agencies around the world.

This program was titled "Snow White," after the famous fairytale, because the perpetrators of the false reports and black propaganda were found to be spreading malicious stories about the Church that had no basis in fact.

As part of this program, the Church filed a series of FOIA requests. Finally, a 1967 memorandum from a Labor Department "investigator," was found to be the source of the discriminatory and harassing treatment of Scientology ministers.

The "Memorandum" — written after a single phone call to an IRS attorney involved in a tax case concerning the Church — contained many false and inflammatory allegations about the Church of Scientology. The memo cited no evidence or documentation to back up the statements; yet the Church found that this single memo had colored the attitudes of Labor and State Department officials for the next eight years.

In 1975, the Church received a letter from the U.S. Department of Labor stating unequivocally that "the information contained in the memorandum was irrelevant, unverified and based on hearsay and . . . should be destroyed."

As a result of the Church's effective use of the FOIA, in this instance and many others like it, the 35 year black propaganda campaign

waged against the Church by government agencies has now been well documented and recognized in a Canadian court for what it is.

On January 23, 1985, Justice John Osler of the Ontario Supreme Court of Canada rendered a significant decision which will have far-reaching implications, ultimately affecting the right of virtually all citizens to obtain and correct any false information about themselves contained in government agency files.

In the decision, the Judge agreed with the Church attorney who stated that an Ontario Provincial Police officer may have "if not deliberately, then certainly recklessly," misrepresented the purpose of the Church's Snow White program, by omitting the critical word "legally" so as to completely alter and malign the program's intention. In true black propaganda-style, even the action to expose government agency false reports was itself falsely reported in an attempt to malign the Church.

Additionally, Judge Osler cited an affidavit from a former U.S. intelligence expert, Fletcher Prouty, who had carefully reviewed the documents the Church had obtained — legally under the Freedom of Information Act — as a result of its "Snow White" program, which said:

"My conclusion is that there has been a definite campaign of harassment against this organization for nearly thirty years, and that this campaign has been directed from a central core and has utilized the tactics and capabilities of the intelligence community to carry out these attacks."

This may well be the first time in the Church's history that the "Snow White" Program and related Church activities and objectives have been thoroughly examined from an unbiased viewpoint, and understood for what they really are.

Those who have been adversely affected by the black propaganda campaign against the Church of Scientology will have the opportunity now to take a fresh look, as Judge Osler did, at what is and isn't true about the Church of Scientology, its founder and the religion practiced by millions of adherents around the world.

The Church of Scientology sees this decision as one that will inspire others to use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain the documentation necessary to call for reform of abusive government agency conduct. The Church will continue its hard-fought battle to bring to all citizens freedom from government agency harassment.



Church of Scientology®
1413 N. Berendo St., Los Angeles, CA 90027
Phone: (213) 662-9431